

1. Introduction/Profile

A. NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION OF SCHOOL, COMMUNITY, AND
EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

St. Mary School Profile

The St. Mary Church-School building was dedicated on September 28, 1928. When St. Mary School opened, the purpose was to educate the children of the Catholic Church in Griffith with emphasis on religious training. It was staffed by three Sisters of St. Francis of Perpetual Adoration from Mishawaka, Indiana, and the order is still affiliated with the school.

At that time the school served students from grades one through eight. In 1958 the first grade had to be dropped due to lack of space. The school population continued to grow, but space for the students did not. In 1961 the second grade had to be dropped from the school. However, with the opening of new classroom space, both grades were reinstated and in 1979 a Kindergarten was added. In 1993 the preschool opened for four and five year olds. At the present time, the preschool services four year olds.

Recent renovations and additional buildings have expanded the programs the school offers. In 1988 a computer lab was opened. In 2002, 2005 and again in 2011 the computer lab was renovated. It now holds 30 computers and wireless Internet access. In 1989 a multi-purpose building was built, which houses the gymnasium. At the same time, the old cafeteria in the school was divided into a library, and music room.

Presently, St. Mary School has an enrollment of 212 students in grades K-8 and 27 preschoolers. A faculty of 12 classroom teachers, 2 full-time aides, a music teacher, art teacher, computer teacher, a physical education teacher, and a librarian serve the students. There is also a full-time principal and secretary. Based on the current enrollment of 239 students the racial mixture of the student body is:

62% Caucasian	2% Multiracial
26% Hispanic	3% Asian
7% African-American	

Communities Served by St. Mary School

St. Mary School is located in Griffith, a suburban community with a population of approximately 20,000 in Northwest Indiana. It is primarily a residential area with several small businesses. Average cost of a home is approximately \$190,000. The large increase in taxes has caused many residents to leave the area.

Although it is one of the Diocese of Gary Schools, it is supported almost exclusively by St. Mary Parish, Griffith. 86% of the students are Catholic and 14% are non-Catholic. Students are drawn from several neighboring communities. They include: Gary, Calumet Township, Merrillville, Highland, Hammond, Schererville, and East Chicago.

Educational Programs

Core Curriculum-St. Mary School strives to provide students with a well-rounded education. Programs are provided to stimulate the spiritual, academic, physical, and social growth of every child. We adhere to the curriculum of studies approved by the State of Indiana, based on the Indiana Academic Standards, including Art, Music, Physical Education, and Computer Science. Religious instruction receives a prominent place in the academic program. The curriculum is reinforced through the use of state approved texts.

Auxiliary components of the curriculum are:

Band-Grades 4-8	Choir-Grades 3-8
Pre-algebra-Grade 7	Algebra-Grade 8
Accelerated Reader-Grades 1-8	

Additional Programs-Students enjoy the benefits of the Officer Friendly program (grades 1-4 and 6), D.A.R.E. (grade 5), and G.R.E.A.T. (grade 7) by a Griffith Police Officer.

Extra-curricular Activities:

Sports-(grades 5-8) basketball, volleyball, soccer, track, and cheerleading
Academic Competitions-Hoosier Spell Bowl, Hoosier Math Bowl, Times Spelling Bee, annual Science Fair
Art Exhibits-F.A.M.E. Festival
Essay Contests
Student Council

B. DESCRIPTION AND LOCATION OF THE CURRICULUM

St. Mary School is committed to improving the academic performance of students by using various forms of instruction. The instructional programs are adjusted and modified to fit the needs of the learners based on state standards and “best practices” research. The school follows the State and Diocesan guidelines relative to curriculum and textbook adoption.

The Curriculum Guides provided by the Diocese of Gary are located in the teacher’s lounge on the teachers’ reference bookshelf. For each content area there is a specific outcome, rationale for that outcome followed by a focus. Copies are also located at the Diocesan Schools’ Office.

Copies of the *Indiana Academic Standards* for English/Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies are also located in the teacher’s lounge on the teachers’ reference bookshelf. Each teacher is also given a copy for each content area to keep in their classroom among their reference materials to use when developing lesson plans.

C. TITLES AND DESCRIPTIONS OF ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENTS TO BE USED IN ADDITION TO ISTEP+

Statewide and Diocesan wide Standardized Achievement Assessments

- a. The **Indiana Statewide Testing for Educational Progress (ISTEP+)** assessment is administered in the spring to grades 3-8 in language arts and mathematics to assess the students’ achievement of established academic standards. Students in grades 5 and 7 also take the ISTEP+ Science to measure the extent to which students achieve established academic standards. Grades 4 and 6 take the ISTEP+ Social Studies.
- b. The Indiana TerraNova CAT is administered in March to grade 2. The test is used to assess the extent to which students achieve established academic standards.
- c. The *InView* cognitive abilities test from CTB/McGraw-Hill is administered to grades 3 and 6 in the fall. These tests are used to obtain accurate and objective information about students’ academic potential.

Description of Additional Assessment Instruments

- Accelerated Reader is used to enhance reading comprehension.
- MacMillan/McGraw Hill Reading tests given for each story unit to assess student progress in comprehension, oral reading skills, grammar, spelling, and phonics in grades 1-5.
- Glencoe Literature/English tests to assess student progress in comprehension and language arts in grades 6-8.
- Daily Oral Language is used to assess and monitor student progress in Language Arts to enhance the areas of Vocabulary, Reading, and Grammar.
- Assessment instruments provided by textbook publishing companies for use at the end of chapters and units.
- Teacher created tests
- Use of the DIBELS Reading Assessment will be done in grades K-2 annually in September.

Special Education and Assessments

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Amendments of 1997 requires that all students be included in statewide assessment and accountability systems by the year 2000. The Northwest Indiana Special Education Cooperative services students at St. Mary School. Once identified, they are tested for discrepancies in speech, hearing, and learning disabilities. If a student has qualified for services, they are required to take ISTEP+ and the Iowa Test of Basic Skills with accommodations, if needed.

2. Mission, Vision, and Beliefs

STATEMENT OF MISSION, VISION, AND BELIEFS

Mission Statement for St. Mary School

St. Mary Catholic School, Griffith, Indiana works in partnership with parents/guardians and exists to help students realize their potential in Jesus Christ. The students are encouraged and supported to grow spiritually, academically, physically, and socially through:

- Integration of secular knowledge based on the Indiana Academic Standards, with the teachings of Jesus Christ.
- Recognition of and growth in a sense of self-worth.
- Treatment of other individuals in a loving and caring environment.
- Service projects which aid the students in looking beyond personal gratification.

Statement of Philosophy for St. Mary School

St. Mary School is a community of worship in Christ, open to growth toward fuller humanness through a living faith, hopes, and love. The goal of this community is to create a Christian environment wherein the child learns to integrate secular knowledge with the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. Achievement of this goal will best be accomplished through mutual warmth and friendliness in an atmosphere of self-awareness and awareness of others.

In order to accomplish this stated purpose of the St. Mary School community:

- Opportunities for prayer and participation in the Liturgical life of the Church will be many and varied.
- Students will develop the knowledge and understanding of their faith through daily participation in religion classes.
- Courtesy and respect for one another will be encouraged by word and example.
- Emphasis will be placed on developing self-disciplined and responsible young adults.
- The curriculum will be updated periodically in order to assure the spiritual, intellectual, social, and physical growth of each individual.

3. Summary of Data

A. DATA FROM THE ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORTS

Data for all grade levels that administer ISTEP+ in the Spring.
(percent passing)

Grade Level	English/Language Arts	Math
3	95%	90%
4	91%	81%
5	77%	77%
6	77%	88%
7	95%	90%
8	85%	85%

These results are not updated on the DOE website, but were taken from the proficiency roster found at CTB McGraw-Hill. St. Mary School consistently scores higher than the state average.

Data for grades that administer ISTEP+ Social Studies

Grade Level	Social Studies
5	60%
6	85%

Our percentage passing has remained fairly consistent. Teachers look at results and search out areas where more instruction is needed.

Data for grades that administer ISTEP+ Science

Grade Level	Science
4	88%
5	65%

Our percentage passing has increased yearly. Teachers are looking at results and making adjustments to the curriculum to ensure passing scores.

Analysis of the data was not available through the DOE or the Learning Connection at this time. We will look at the Growth Model when available for the 2010-2011 ISTEP+ results when available.

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B. DATA RELATED TO PERFORMANCE INDICATORS WHICH IMPACT STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT.

St. Mary's attendance rate has been above state expectancy except for the 2000-2001 school year. We do realize that students are absent from school for reasons other than illness. Parents are required to notify the office when a child is absent and they must return from doctor or dentist appointments with a note from the doctor or dentist. We also send parents of children with chronic absences a letter authorized by the State, which must be completed by a doctor. To encourage students to attend school regularly, we reward them at the end of the year with a perfect attendance certificate and a gift certificate from a local restaurant.

Attendance rate for 2010 was 97.20%.

The administrator/pupil ratio is 1:239. The teacher/student ratio on average is 1:24 in grades K-8. Teacher student ratio is 1:10 in preschool. All teachers attend professional development opportunities based on their individual needs and the needs of the school.

C. OTHER INFORMATION ABOUT EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING AND THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT.

St. Mary School has a newly renovated computer lab with 30 computers. This allows an entire class to receive an hour of computer instruction per week. We also have high-speed Internet access for the students and staff. Each teacher has been given a laptop computer from which they can access the computer lab. We have also gone to web-based grading program that teachers continually update and parents/students can access for assignments and grades.

We have on staff three full-time aides who are able to assist students who need more individualized instruction. They are available to all grade levels.

We have departmentalized classrooms for grades 6,7,and 8. This allows the students to experience an atmosphere similar to the public school, making for an easier transition when they graduate.

4. Assessment conclusions regarding the current status of educational programming.

Conclusions about the current educational programming, derived from an assessment of educational programming, include the following:

A. Information about how the school's curriculum supports the achievement of Indiana academic standards.

St. Mary's curriculum is consistent with the standards and ISTEP+ objectives. Our textbooks are chosen because they support these standards. Teachers use the standards' checklist when writing weekly lesson plans and indicate the standards being taught for each lesson. Technical assistance has been provided to teachers for creating their own websites. Teachers are also being trained to use an online grading system.

In addition to standard teaching, St. Mary School has addressed the Indiana Academic Standards in other ways:

- Daily Oral Language Practice
- Accelerated Reader
- Computation Drills
- Daily Math Problem Solving

B. Information about how the school's instructional strategies support the achievement of Indiana Academic Standards.

The administrator, teachers, staff, and parents have high expectations for the students. Accountability for instruction ultimately rests with the classroom teacher. However, there is also accountability that rests with the administration to facilitate and deliver. The teaching/learning process is key to lasting school improvement and student performance.

These strategies have been shown to improve student performance, thereby supporting the achievement of Indiana's Academic Standards:

- Teachers attend workshops and in-service programs.
- Teachers use ISTEP+ results to identify areas of weakness for remediation and reinforcement.
- Partner teachers discuss students' progress and steps to advance learning based on the state standards.

C. Conclusions about student achievement, based on information from ISTEP+ and other assessment strategies.

St. Mary School uses the ISTEP+ and TerraNova CAT scores to make decisions regarding modification of instruction, teaching strategies, and remedial teaching. The ISTEP+ results are examined and compared to State Proficiency Standards. Students in grades 3 and 6 who fail either the Math or English/Language Arts sections of ISTEP+, are offered the opportunity to attend summer school offered through the Griffith Public Schools. If students do not take advantage of this opportunity or do not live in Griffith, we do require proof that tutoring has taken place during the summer.

Review of reading level tests and unit test in reading and math are used to evaluate skills learned. Homework, daily class work, weekly tests, and teacher observations are also important assessment tools.

Students who fall short of the standards for achievement are placed in smaller groups for remediation or given individual help. This is provided by either the classroom teacher or the teacher's aide.

Students who show a high level of achievement of the Indiana Academic Standards, as well as other areas of the curriculum receive motivation to do so in several ways:

- An awards assembly is held at the end of each semester to acknowledge students who have been on the honor roll.
- Awards are given to the top three students in each class for Accelerated Reader
- Teachers distribute their own incentives to students in the classroom.

Currently, St. Mary School is addressing the need to improve our performance in Writing Applications. Three teachers will be attending a writing workshop and then present to the rest of the teachers what they learned. Our Principal has stressed the importance of this area of instruction through discussion, showing the importance of this skill.

D. Parental participation in the school.

Parents are encouraged from the onset of the year to become active members in the school community and their child's education. We believe that parents and teachers are "partners in education", as mentioned in the school Mission Statement. This philosophy is developed through many forms of communication between school and home:

- Classroom parent meetings-held at the beginning of the school year.
- Monthly Wildcat News-contains monthly calendar, principal's letter, and fliers from community, school, or church organizations.
- Weekly classroom folders-contain students work, requires parent signature.
- Parent-Teacher Conferences may be requested by parent or teacher at any time during the school year.
- Home and School Association Meetings-held four times a year
- Advisory Council-monthly meetings are held. We are in the process of creating a new five -year strategic plan.
- Athletic Association-organization of parents who volunteer as officers, coaches, and concession workers.
- Website-smsgriffith.org is the site parents can access to see the school calendar, upcoming events, school pictures, and information about the school.
- Service Hours-parents are required to volunteer 24 hours of time to work various fundraisers throughout the year.
- Online Grading-use of this service allows parents to access their child's grades, homework assignments, and test scores at any time.
- Weekly E-mails are sent to all parents reminding them of school events.

E. Technology as a learning tool.

Technology plays an important part in today's classrooms. St. Mary School recognizes the importance for all our students to be technologically literate in order to become productive and responsible members of a diverse, globally based society.

All classrooms, computer lab, and media center are networked and connected to the Internet. Our computer lab was renovated in the fall of 2005 to include 30 new computers with Microsoft XP software. We have purchased additional software programs including KidPix and a typing tutorial. Each classroom has at least two computers which the students may use to perform research or take Accelerated Reader tests.

Our computer lab facilitator has been working with the other Catholic schools in the area to develop and implement a curriculum for technology. Through monthly meetings, they have discussed what components are necessary to create a curriculum which will help our students become successful members of this technological society.

Professional development has been provided for the teachers throughout the 2005-2006 school year on various programs of the MicrosoftXP software. These training sessions will continue throughout the next three years.

We are also in the process of offering computer training to parents and members of the community.

F. Safe and disciplined learning environment.

St. Mary School recognizes the fact that a safe and disciplined learning environment impacts student achievement. We strive to provide a safe, orderly, and clean learning environment that fosters respect among students, staff, and parents. An electronic surveillance-monitoring camera is located at the front entrance to the school. All visitors must be admitted to the building and report to the school office. All other doors to the school are locked throughout the school day.

St. Mary School has developed guidelines for student conduct. The student/parent handbook outlines students' rights, responsibilities, regulations, procedures, and consequences. It is revised (if needed) and distributed to students and parents every year. We have also included for Fall 2006 a new Bullying Policy. It defines, addresses the affects of bullying, and outlines the consequences for bullying.

At St. Mary's, several initiatives address issues related to a safe and disciplined environment:

- Crisis Management Plan that all faculty and staff can implement.
- Monthly fire drills are conducted.
- Quarterly tornado/bomb drills are conducted.
- Public address system can be used as a two-way communication between office and classroom.
- All employees and parent volunteers must under go a limited criminal history background check.
- All employees and parent volunteers must attend a VIRTUS training session and continue training through an online course for one year.
- Playground supervisors are equipped with walkie-talkies.
- D.A.R.E. education for students in grade 5.
- G.R.E.A.T. education for students in grade 7.
- Grades 6-8 participate in CYO and Times Spelling Bees.
- Grade 7 students participate in Challenger Learning Center.
- Grades 4-6 participate in Spell and Math Bowl.
- Students are actively involved in Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts.
- ChildLures Program is used at all grade levels.
- Escape School assembly done every other year.
- Honor Roll student lists are posted on school web site each quarter.
- Perfect Attendance is rewarded at the end of the school year.

G. Professional development.

St. Mary School recognizes that the professional development of teachers, administrators, and support staff is vital to school improvement and increased student achievement. We also acknowledge the fact that this must be a continuous process and that all must view professional development as a priority.

Professional development is defined as that which will improve the knowledge, skills, and attitude of employees. Professional development should include any process that enables teachers and others to acquire and apply knowledge, understanding, skills, and abilities to achieve personal and organizational goals and to improve student learning relative to the Indiana Academic Standards.

St. Mary School budget allows for teachers to attend workshops, seminars, and in-services that are aligned with their curriculum, instruction, or assessment, all with the end result being increased student achievement. The Home and School Association also provides monies for this purpose, as well as grants from the State of Indiana. Continuous learning for educators is needed to maximize learning for all students. Professional development should be an integral feature of school improvement.

5. Student Achievement Objectives/Goals.

A. Attendance Rate.

St. Mary School attendance rate has been above 96% with the exception of the 2000-2001 school year when there was a significant drop. We have strengthened our attendance policy and set an appropriate amount of days allowable per semester. We have also defined excused and unexcused absences, which has helped cut down on absences. We also require a doctor's excuse for absences three days in length.

Year	Attendance Rate	
	State Average (Public and Nonpublic)	Attendance Rate B930
2008-09	96.1%	97.7%
2007-08	95.9%	97.3%
2006-07	95.8%	97.0%
2005-06	96.0%	97.0%
2004-05	95.9%	97.0%
2003-04	95.9%	97.2%
2002-03	95.8%	96.6%
2001-02	95.9%	96.2%
2000-01	95.7%	93.6%

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B. Percentage of students meeting academic standards under the ISTEP+ program.

All tested grades score significantly higher than the state average for both public and non-public schools. We currently have a passing rate of 85.2% for all students tested. We are trying to reach the 95th percentile of all students passing both the English/Lang. Arts and Math portions of the ISTEP+. Our school looks closely at the sub test for each standard to determine academic goals for the upcoming school years.

6. Specific Areas Where Improvement is Needed Immediately.
7. Benchmarks for progress.
9. Proposed interventions

Goal #1

Students will continue to improve their mathematical problem-solving skills.

Rationale:

Of all the areas related to mathematics on the ISTEP+, this appeared to be the weakest at all grade levels.

Benchmark:

This goal will be achieved over a five-year period by noting an increase in the percentage of students who score above standard on this portion of the ISTEP+.

Strategies:

1. (Fall 2011 and ongoing) Use problem solving features of the Mathematics Currently used.
Utilize the Leveled Problem Solving daily with students encouraging them to follow the steps of problem solving. (What do I know? What do I need to find out? What strategy will I use? Why? What is my solution? How can I check my answer?)
Incorporate the problem of the day (Side bar of each teacher's edition for each lesson) into daily lessons. The problem should be done together using the steps of problem solving mentioned above.
Encourage the use of different strategies in solving problems. (Drawing a picture, making a model, acting it out, guess and check, estimation, using a table, finding a pattern, etc.)
Implementation of Math Out of the Box for grades K-5 to strengthen problem solving skills.

Persons Responsible: Classroom Teachers, Principal

Funding Source: NISEC

Professional Development: Provided by publisher

2. (Fall, 2011 and ongoing) Professional development of all teachers of math.
 - Teachers will have the opportunity to observe local educators who are implementing different programs in problem solving. These alternatives may be incorporated in part or in whole into our existing curriculum.
 - Teachers who do observe other techniques of teaching problem solving will share the information they receive with the rest of the faculty in a timely manner.
 - Teachers will meet with the principal at least once each quarter in level groups (primary K-2, intermediate 3-5, junior high 6-8) to collaborate.

Persons Responsible: Principal, Classroom Teachers

Funding Source: School Budget (substitutes and resource materials)

3. (Fall, 2011 and ongoing) Use of Education City (assessment tool/tutorial instrument) at all grade levels.

Persons Responsible: Principal, Teachers of math

Funding Source: NISEC.

Professional Development: Teachers will be trained by computer teacher who has gone through training of the program.

Goal #2

All students in grade 3 will pass the IRead assessment.

Rationale:

With the incorporation of a Reading Plan and 90 minute block scheduling for reading in grades K-5, we desire to identify and work with those students who may be struggling readers.

Benchmark:

This goal will be achieved by beginning diagnostic testing and interventions beginning in grades K, 1, and 2.

Strategies:

(Fall, 2011 and ongoing) Teachers in grades K-5 will administer Dibels test to all students.

- .Testing will be done three times a year.
- Students will begin interventions as needed
- Re-evaluations will be done as needed.
- Teachers will monitor and assess reading strategies in the classroom and make necessary adjustments to reach all learners.

Persons Responsible: Principal, Teachers

Funding Source: None

Professional Development:

1. (Fall, 2011 and ongoing) Teachers will receive opportunities for professional development in the area of writing.
 - Training in administering Dibels testing to be done by Principal.
 - Teachers will attend workshops focusing on reading.
 - Teachers of grades K-5 will meet bi-weekly to discuss interventions and needs of students.
 - Teachers of grades K-5 will have opportunities to meet with other teachers in the Diocese to observe and discuss reading plans.

Persons Responsible: Principal, Teachers

Funding Source: St. Mary Home and School Association

Goal #3

To enhance the use of technology in our curriculum.

Rationale:

Our present curriculum is not an organized progression of skills. Students need to become computer literate in order to achieve success in today's society. The faculty also requires additional training in the use of technology in order to guide the students more effectively.

Benchmark:

This goal will be achieved over a five-year period by noting the increased use of technology in each classroom as evidenced in lesson plans and the work/projects produced by the students.

Strategies:

1. (Fall, 2011 and ongoing) establish a set curriculum for each grade level.
 - Teachers will be given the opportunity to contribute ideas for a Diocesan Curriculum.
 - DOG Tech Committee will establish a curriculum that is developmental and builds on skills at each grade level.
 - Administrators will provide this curriculum to all technology teachers in their buildings and require them to follow the guidelines.

Persons Responsible: Faculty, DOG Tech Committee, Principal, Technology teacher.

Funding Source: State Grants, St. Mary Home and School Association.

Professional Development: Presentation of technology curriculum and how to implement in the classroom.

2. (Fall, 2011 and ongoing) Train classroom teachers in the use of Interwrite/Mobi units to enhance classroom teaching.

Persons Responsible: Technology teacher, Principal, Faculty

Funding Source: St. Mary Home and School Association

3. (Fall, 2011 and ongoing) Improve communication classroom teachers and technology teacher.

- Fine tune existing programs so that they are readily accessible to classroom teachers at all times.
- Incorporate classroom curriculum into computer classes.

Persons Responsible: Technology teacher, classroom teachers

Funding Source: None

Professional Development: None

10. Professional Development

St. Mary's vision of professional development is that all of our educators will improve their teaching skills so as to affect the student's achievement, especially in the areas of language arts, math, and technology. It is our goal to provide experiences and promote activities in research based practices. St. Mary School understands that what is provided and how it is presented will impact the effects of the professional development. What is offered must be expanded to explore the use of different professional development strategies rather than the typical attendance at workshops and seminars. It is essential that the plan for professional development be aligned with our action plan and continuously monitored for its impact on our students.

In accordance with the cultural competency component of our school action plan, all teachers attended an in-service hosted by the Diocese of Gary on Hispanic students and their education. We also celebrate Black History month with a variety of classroom activities. The students are taught about people of other faiths and their culture through daily readings.

Types of professional development that the faculty will be attending include: Technological training-incorporating technology use into the everyday curriculum through the use of Interwrite boards and Mobi Units.

Language Arts/Reading-work on developing a reading plan based on a 90 minute block scheduling for grades K-5.

Attendance at the Diocesan In-service is mandatory for all contracted teachers.

11. Statutes and rules to be waived.

St. Mary School does not present any statutes and/or rules to be waived.

12. Time line for implementation, review, and revision.

Professional Development for 2011-2012

August 2011- Interwrite/Mobi training
Dibels testing training

September 2011-Teacher Exchange Days hosted by the Diocese of Gary

October 2011-Diocesan Inservice

January 2012-Review of Teacherease online grading system
Preparation for ISTEP+ testing

March 2012-Review of Dibels testing

May 2012-Review of SIP Goals and Objectives

In addition to this professional development time line, all staff will be given information and opportunities to attend seminars, workshops, or in-services pertaining to topics of interest and in keeping with the school goals for our improvement plan.